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SUBJECT: PUNJAB SUPPORTS IDP EFFORTS

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¶1. (SBU) Summary: The UN Human Rights Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) has registered 54,396 individuals in Punjab as of June 6, the majority of whom have taken refuge in private residences, but UNHCR expects many more have arrived in the province. The Punjab Government, Governor and other political figures have launched relief funds to collect supplies and money for the IDP camps in Swat. End Summary.

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No camps set up
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¶2. (SBU) The press reported May 31 that the provincial government would continue to support the camps in the North West Frontier Province (NWFPP). "Punjab provincial government openly supports the relief effort but would prefer to ship relief supplies than to establish camps," Riaz Hameed Chaudhry, Commission, Afghan Refugees Punjab told poloff on June 3. According to the media, Punjab Law Minister Rana Sanaullah detailed that the provincial government will register IDPs coming to stay with relatives and ensure that they refrain from illegal activities. He added that District Coordination Officers and District Police Officers will register IDPs in their area but did not offer an estimate of total number of IDPs.

¶3. (SBU) Chaudhry told poloff on June 6 that the UNHCR has registered 58,635 individuals (8,969 families) in Punjab, which includes Islamabad. Of these, 2,848 are in Lahore and 4,239 in Islamabad. He commented that these numbers do not accurately include those staying with family or friends.

¶4. (SBU) Shaista Malik, Senior Vice President for Punjab Women's Wing, related on June 1 that she personally knows of ten families who came from Swat to settle in Lahore. "One family has a maid from Swat and her family arrived one day. I am supporting these families now but I cannot do it alone. I am starting to ask people to give what they can to help," she said. She estimated that there are at least 40 IDPs in Lahore that she supports financially.

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All Parties Provide Money and Supplies
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¶5. (SBU) Punjab Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif created a Relief Fund for IDPs and, on May 15, he visited relief camps in Risalpur, during which he handed over 150 trucks with relief supplies. According to the Punjab Chief Minister's Relief Fund website, the Punjab government sent 40 mobile medical teams to Swabi, Mardan and Malakand as well as 278 trucks of relief supplies, including medicine, staple foods and bedding supplies.

The Punjab government will also provide 28,000 wheat flour bags of 20-kg each on weekly basis to IDP camps in NWFP, said Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Chairman Raja Zafarul Haq on May 29. Every PML-N parliamentary member will donate Rs 500,000 (6,250 dollars) to the PML-N relief fund, according to press reports on May 19. Senior Advisor to Punjab Chief Minister, Sardar Zulfiqar Khan Khosa told press on May 13 that PML-N Chief Nawaz Sharif has donated Rs 5 million (62,500 dollars); the Members of the Provincial Assembly (MPA) of Punjab have contributed one month's salary, and government officials above Grade-8 donated one day's salary to the Fund, he added.

¶6. (SBU) Punjab Governor Salman Taseer created the Governor's Relief fund, and roped in film and music stars to raise money for IDPs. As Chancellor of Punjab University, the Governor also encouraged faculty to donate one day's salary, according to press reports. On June 8, Taseer dispatched 25 trucks of relief supplies to Mardan and Swabi, according to press.

¶7. (SBU) Along with relief camps set up on Mall Road, Pakistan Muslim League (PML) MPA Ayesha Javed told poloff on June 4 that her party has donated Rs 5 million (62,500 dollars) of supplies, such as flour, cooking oil, and fans. PML leader Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi has personally donated 2.5 million Rupees (31,000 dollars) and each MPA has donated one month's salary, she confided. She also confirmed that the party established a refugee house in Islamabad that houses 40 families. "We are trying to do what we can as every little bit helps," she commented. When asked if the IDP's will stay, Shaista Malik told poloff on June 1 that "they cannot." "They have nothing to go home to but they must return to their homes."

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MP's visit IDP camps in NWFP
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¶8. (SBU) According to press, all cabinet members will visit the IDP camps from June 1 to July 15 to ensure proper distribution of assistance. Pervaiz Malik, Senior Advisor to Chief Minister for political affairs, told poloff on June 4 that he had just returned from three days in Mardan and his wife, Shaista Malik, was currently traveling to the camps.

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Possible Employment for IDPs
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¶9. (SBU) Members of the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) and Surgical Instrument Manufacturers Association of Pakistan (SIMAP) told visiting Econoffs on May 28 that they have started employing the handful of IDPs who have fled to Sialkot. Secretary General Hassan Ali Bhatti observed that the area could offer employment to hundreds of IDPs if the government agreed to train them in the skills needed by local industry. SIMAP members particularly underscored their difficulty in retaining skilled workers in the tight Sialkot labor market, and welcomed the opportunity to train and employ IDPs.

¶10. (SBU) Comment: Punjab government does not have a clear policy on how to handle IDPs that arrive in Punjab. So far, provincial officials and politicians have focused on collecting money and supplies to ship to relief camps outside the province.

Meanwhile, the difficulty of counting IDPs who reside in private residences in Punjab has complicated the effort to meet their basic needs within the province. End Comment.

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